



FEMA

Hazard Mitigation Saves Historic Galveston Home

Galveston Island, TX − When Hurricane Ike slammed ashore on Galveston Island in September 2008, the storm's 100-mph winds and 11-foot storm surge took aim at one of the most important historic buildings in Texas – Moody Mansion.

The mansion suffered some rainwater intrusion and flooding from Hurricane Ike's surge, but damage was minimal, thanks to hazard mitigation measures that dramatically reduced disaster losses, said Betty Massey, executive director of the Mary Moody Northern Endowment, which owns and operates the mansion. The measures are all part of the endowment's phased, systematic, strategic approach to protecting historic resources through disaster planning, preparation, and hazard mitigation.

The mansion is, by any standard, a priceless treasure. Construction spanned 3 years, from 1892 to 1895. The building is crafted of red brick generously iced with limestone, sporting bold arches, towers, dormers, and a pyramidal red-tile roof. It contains 31 rooms on three floors atop a raised basement. Perhaps the most stunning feature is a 12-foot-tall leaded, stained-glass window overlooking the landing of the finely crafted staircase in the oak-paneled central hall.

During Hurricane Ike, winds hurled debris broadside into the stained-glass window, but the window had been covered with safety glass to protect it in a storm. Mary Hoehne, Moody Mansion facility manager, said, "The covering did its job. There's no question that without the safety glass we would have lost that window."

Broken windows would also have allowed substantial water intrusion and damage throughout the home. That's why most of the other 50-plus windows are covered with clear storm coverings of polycarbonate, a kind of plastic shield that is nearly as clear as glass.

The best of the polycarbonate glazing products are touted for their high-impact strength, flame resistance, insulation, and clarity. This type of shield is often used in bus stop shelters, sky lights, and similar projects that demand both transparency and extreme strength. Placing the polycarbonate on the windows protects the mansion's openings without detracting from the historic building's façade. The window protection system has been a major investment that the mansion is continuing in installments as funds are available.

According to Ms. Massey, Moody Mansion stewards believe their responsibility to safeguard the property requires hazard mitigation measures. Some people think historic properties cannot be protected from hazards because those protective measures could detract from the historic buildings. To the contrary, she feels hazard mitigation is imperative for historic buildings because these structures represent priceless resources that cannot be lost.



Galveston County,
Texas



Quick Facts

Sector:

Private

Cost:

Amount Not Available

Primary Activity/Project:

Retrofitting, Structural

Primary Funding:

Non-profit organization (NPO)